

## MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL

## CITY OF AUSTIN, TEXAS

## Special Meeting

March 28, 1973

7:30 P.M.

## TOWNES HALL, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

The meeting was called to order with Mayor Butler presiding.

## Roll Call:

Present: Councilmen Dryden, Nichols, Mayor Pro Tem Love, Councilmen  
Lebermann, Friedman, Handcox, Mayor Butler

Absent: None

At 7:30 p.m. Mayor Butler opened the public hearing scheduled for that time on the Capital Improvements Program for the West University Area Street Plan.

Mr. Bill Parrish, representing Save University Neighborhoods, requested that all questions be held until the conclusion of the entire presentation by SUN. He quoted from Highway Research Record #356, Page 69, which stated that a conflict existed between residents on a street and the traffic using the street. He stated that City transportation policies usually emphasized the traffic aspect rather than how the street plan would affect the residents. He presented the conclusions of the San Francisco Planning Department study of the quality of the environment along some of the city streets, which included the following:

1. Heavy traffic was associated with an increase in the number of apartment buildings and a decrease in the number of single-family homes and number of families with children.
2. Heavy traffic was associated with a drastic decrease in social interaction or street activity; conversely, a quiet street with little or no traffic and with families promoted a rich social climate and strong sense of community.
3. Heavy traffic was associated with the withdrawal from the physical environment; conversely, the street with low traffic showed evidence of acute, critical, and appreciative awareness of and care for the physical environment.

4. Objective and perceived environmental quality deteriorated with increase in traffic.

The policy implications of this study were as follows:

1. Through-traffic should be eliminated or at least reduced in the residential areas of the City by devices such as improvements in public transit and controls on the use of streets for traffic.
2. Vehicular traffic should be more concentrated on the main arteries of the City where there is less residential development by increasing their capacity through techniques such as separated grades, selective widening and parking control.
3. Residential streets should be protected from through-traffic by blocking them altogether or by devices such as rough pavement surfaces, necking down entrances, bending alignments, landscaping and sidewalk treatment, all of which would slow traffic down to a residential pace.

He stated that the results of the Buchanan study in England were similar, and he felt that the implications of the San Francisco study were applicable to their neighborhood. He stated that at present they had a quiet residential community of people actively involved with each other as evidenced by the Round-up activities occurring in the neighborhood during the current week. He felt that a decrease in community involvement and activity in a University community would be undesirable.

He also noted that an increase in traffic yielded an increase in air and noise pollution. He pointed to the effects that wider and busier streets would have on land use. All on-street parking would be eliminated on 25th Street when widened and made one-way, with resulting parking problems. He was concerned with the replacement of old homes and green spaces with parking lots. He was concerned that homes would be replaced with apartment houses and commercial developments. He concluded with a quotation from City Magazine, Winter, 1972.

Mr. Neil Wolf, also representing SUN, discussed the architectural diversity of the West University Area neighborhood. He cited the civic and community activity of the residents in the neighborhood, such as Ecology Action's recycling actions. He stated that the tree-lined residential streets were a vital part of the neighborhood. He noted the repainting of Holloway House and the \$1.8 million loan by HUD for College Houses, Inc., to buy and build two cooperatives. Contiguous with the neighborhood was a green belt of creek, woods, and trail. He noted the commercialization resulting from heavy traffic on 24th Street. He stated that the Capital Improvements Plan for 25th Street would turn the quiet residential neighborhood into an express route, unsafe for children and pedestrians, and encouraging blighty commercialization. The north-south Rio Grande thoroughfare would eliminate Wooldridge Hall with its nursery school and fine old oak trees in the community. It would increase the traffic flow from 6,000 a day to an estimated 17,000 a day.

Mr. Wolf stated that blanket zoning in 1941 sanctioning creation of a high density area had resulted in the demolition of homes to provide parking lots for environmentally-unsound apartment buildings. A full city block in front of Seton Hospital was once filled with homes but was now an unsightly parking area.

Mr. Brian Dudley, also representing SUN, described the proposed street plan. 24th and 25th Streets would form a one-way pair east and west. Rio Grande and Nueces would form a one-way pair north and south. The purpose of this street plan, according to the Department of Traffic and Transportation, was establishment of a major east-west thoroughfare and provision of a direct north-south route into the west side of the central business district and State Capitol complex. This plan was projected to increase the University area traffic capacity 123%. He made use of maps to trace the routes of increased traffic. He noted that the West University Neighborhood had the highest concentration of pedestrians and bicycles in the City, and he was concerned with safety hazards. He noted where the bike lanes were in direct conflict with the proposed thoroughfares. Only three intersections would be provided with signalization to protect pedestrians and bicycles. Only two of the four heavily-used pedestrian crosswalks on 26th would be signalized. He stated that the area had a very limited amount of on-street and off-street parking, and parking problems would be increased by planned elimination of parking on 25th and probable elimination of parking on Rio Grande and Nueces. Green spaces would probably be converted into parking lots. As an alternative, he proposed further development of the City's mass transit system to provide access to the University. He noted that 5,000 students rode bicycles to campus, nearly 10,000 walked to campus, and the shuttle busses carried 25,000 passengers per day. I.H. 35, Mo-Pac, and Lamar Boulevard should be used for north-south access to the downtown area, rather than routes through the University area. East-west traffic should be routed to the north and south of the University area.

Mr. Cary Jones, also representing SUN, attributed the steady deterioration of the West University neighborhood to an outdated zoning scheme which had zoned the area primarily for apartments. He noted that University enrollment had stabilized and that students were free to live anywhere in the City, and he referred to the "Vacancy" signs in the West University area. He noted the undesirable effects of apartment buildings on the environment. He proposed the following ordinance: "That written notice of the filing of an application for a building or destruction permit within the area bordered by 15th, 29th, Guadalupe, and Lamar Streets shall be given to the named representatives of Save University Neighborhoods within one day of the filing thereof; such notice shall include the name and address of the applicant, location of the affected property, the destruction date, and the date of such request; said notice shall be given by depositing same in the U. S. Mail." This was proposed as an interim measure before offering a zoning scheme change in deference to the Planning Department's work on the Master Plan. He also proposed that the proposed University Area Street Improvement Program be postponed until the completion of IH-35 and Mo-Pac Expressways and further evaluation of transportation needs in light of all relevant factors. There was discussion with the Council as to how the wording in the proposed ordinance had been changed from that originally proposed.

Councilman Handcox stated that if there were no opposition present to SUN's proposal, he was willing to accept the ordinance as stated. Mayor Butler noted that he had cards from 53 persons wishing to speak and called for opposition.

#### Motion

Mayor Butler noted that no ordinance could be passed at this time, as public notices had not been given and no ordinance was before the Council. Councilman Friedman suggested that the item be adopted as a matter of general policy by resolution and questioned whether an ordinance was necessary.

Councilman Handcox moved the Council approve the recommendations requiring written notice to SUN representatives of any building or destruction applications filed for the area in question and postponing any CIP West University Area Street Plan action until the completion of the Master Plan of the Goals for Austin Program. The motion was seconded by Councilman Friedman.

Ms. Svea Sauer, owner and resident in the 700 block of 25th Street, believed that what had destroyed the environment in the neighborhood was absentee ownership. She believed the Council should do something not about the streets, but about the carelessness and lack of responsibility of the residents of the neighborhood in taking care of their animals and property.

#### Vote

The motion by Councilman Handcox, seconded by Councilman Friedman, carried by the following vote:

Ayes: Councilmen Dryden, Nichols, Mayor Pro Tem Love, Councilmen  
Lebermann, Friedman, Handcox, Mayor Butler  
Noes: None

Councilman Lebermann requested of the City Manager and City Attorney that other ad hoc neighborhood groups in the City enjoy the same notification privilege as expressed in the motion. A representative of Ecology Action requested that the Council consider the requirement of an Environmental Impact Statement for any similar street plan proposal in the future.

The Council then adjourned.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

*Ray Butler*  
Mayor

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

*Grace Monroe*  
City Clerk